

CLAIMS:

1. An online gaming system enabling users connected to a communications network to interact with a computer game being played across the network, the system comprising at least one state engine for controlling the state of the game and at least one presentation engine for controlling the presentation to users of an output representing the state of the game;

the state engine being arranged to enable one or more users to affect the state of the game by communicating with the state engine and thereby act as participant(s) in the game; and

the presentation engine being arranged to enable at least one other user to affect the presentation of the output to one or more users acting as spectator(s) of the game by communicating with the presentation engine.

2 The gaming system according to claim 1, wherein the system has a state engine which is shared by the users, but each user has its own presentation engine.

3. The gaming system according to claim 1, wherein each user has its own state engine and its own presentation engine.

4. The gaming system according to claim 1, wherein the system has a state engine and a presentation engine which are shared by the users.

5. The gaming system according to any preceding claim, wherein the system further comprises a side channel for communicating at least one of voice and data to other users while the game is being played.

6. The gaming system according to any preceding claim, wherein the online game is played in a substantially real time manner across the network.

7. The gaming system according to any preceding claim, wherein the network is a wireless communications network.

8. The gaming system according to any preceding claim, wherein the user terminals are wireless terminals.

9. The gaming system according to any preceding claim, wherein at least one of the spectators acts as a cameraman for affecting the virtual viewing position and angle of the game as seen by the other spectators.

10. The gaming system according to claim 9, wherein said cameraman is also arranged to affect the view of the game as seen by the participants.

11. The gaming system according to claim 9 or 10, wherein said spectator acts as a cameraman using camera circuitry stored in a presentation engine.

12. A method of interacting with a computer game being played online by users connected across a communications network, the method comprising:

controlling the state of the game using a state engine;

controlling the presentation to users of an output representing the state of the game;

enabling one or more users acting as participant(s) in the game to affect the state of the game by communicating with the state engine; and

enabling one or more users acting as spectator(s) of the game to affect the presentation of the output by communicating with the presentation engine.

13. A wireless user terminal for playing a computer game online across a communication network, the user terminal comprising:

a user interface for inputting and outputting information to a human user;

at least one state engine for controlling the state of the game and at least one presentation engine for controlling the presentation of an output representing the state of the game to the user interface; and

a network interface for transferring information to and from network.

14. The user terminal according to claim 13, further comprising a side channel for transferring further information to and from the network.

15. The user terminal according to claim 14, wherein the further information transferred from the side channel is at least one of voice, SMS and email data.

16. An online gaming system enabling users connected to a communications network to interact with a computer game being played across the network, the system comprising at least one state engine for controlling the state of the game in accordance with state rules and at least one presentation engine for controlling the presentation to the users of an output representing the state of the game; wherein:

the state engine is arranged to enable one or more users to affect the state of the game by communicating with the state engine and thereby act as participant(s) in the game; and

the state engine is arranged to vary the state rules in response to inputs received from the spectators indicating a support for a participant so as to vary the rules to favour the participant having the most support.